

Serial No. 10/663,889
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Amendments to the Abstract:

Please amend the Abstract as follows:

~~The present invention relates to a~~ A support structure for a spare tire on a vehicle. A shell is attached to the vehicle and includes first and second end portions and a bottom portion extending at least partially between the first and second end portions. The shell at least partially defines a spare tire storage chamber and includes an opening providing access to the storage chamber, wherein the opening is adjacent to the first end portion. ~~A support member is adapted to support a spare tire.~~ The support member is slidably positioned above the bottom portion and is movable back and forth along a movement path from a first position in which the support member is substantially disposed within the shell and a second position in which the support member is at least partially disposed outside the shell. ~~The support member includes a lower interface surface for directly contacting an upper interface surface of the bottom portion of the shell in sliding engagement as the support member is moved along the movement path.~~ In certain embodiments, a retention member can be fixedly attached to the shell. In further embodiments, the support member and the shell have a cooperative locking configuration. ~~A support structure adapted to support a spare tire for a vehicle is also disclosed.~~